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Working Group I
Item 2 (a) of the provisional agenda

PROTECTION OF THE ATMOSPHERE: CLIMATE CHANGE

Report of the Secretary-General of the Conference

INTRODUCTION

1. This paper was prepared by the Secretariat in response to Decision 2/8 of the Preparatory Committee at its second session, in which the Secretary General was requested "(c)...to continue his efforts to follow the work to estimate the cost, in particular to developing countries, of adopting measures to limit possible climate change..." and "(e)...to continue to monitor the major intergovernmental activities in the area of atmosphere and climate change, and to prepare a report that analyses and summarizes those activities and offers suggestions thereon".

2. Four major ongoing processes need to be reported on: the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC); the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); the World Meteorological Congress, and the UNEP Governing Council. In addition, a brief report is made on progress in the area of costing studies, especially for developing countries.

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3. This report is mainly for the information of the UNCED Preparatory Committee. The Secretary-General of the Conference will continue to liaise with the intergovernmental processes mentioned in this paper, to ensure that their results are reflected in the work prepared by UNCED, and in particular in Agenda 21.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (INC)

4. The INC had its second session in Geneva on 19-28 June. Consequently, it has not been possible to include in this report the substantive outcome of this meeting. Nevertheless, a number of points related to the INC need to be reported to the Preparatory Committee.

5. In accordance with the INC's decision 1/1 (annex, paras. 5 and 6), Working Group I of the INC will prepare a draft text for consideration by the plenary related to:

"(a) Appropriate commitments, beyond those required by existing agreements, for limiting and reducing net emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, on the protection, enhancement and increase of sinks and reservoirs, and in support of measures to counter the adverse effects of climate change, taking into account that contributions should be equitably differentiated according to countries' responsibilities and their level of development;

(b) Appropriate commitments on adequate and additional financial resources to enable developing countries to meet incremental costs required to fulfil the commitments referred to above and to facilitate the transfer of technology expeditiously on a fair and most favourable basis;

(c) Commitments addressing the special situation of developing countries, taking into account their development needs, including, inter alia, the problems of small island developing countries, low-lying coastal areas and areas threatened by erosion, flooding, desertification and high urban atmospheric pollution; also taking into account the problems of economies in transition."

6. In accordance with Committee decision 1/1 (annex, paras. 5 and 7), Working Group II will prepare a draft text for consideration by the plenary related to:

"(a) Legal and institutional mechanisms, including, inter alia, entry into force, withdrawal, compliance and assessment and review;

(b) Legal and institutional mechanisms related to scientific cooperation, monitoring and information;

(c) Legal and institutional mechanisms related to adequate and additional financial resources and technological needs and cooperation, and technology transfer to developing countries corresponding to the commitments agreed to in Working Group I."

7. In accordance with Committee decision 1/1 (annex, para. 2), the work of the Working Groups must be interrelated and will be integrated by the plenary. To this end, the two Working Groups will report regularly to the plenary on progress made. In this context, paragraph 10 of the annex to the same decision foresees the need for harmonizing the drafting done by the Working Groups.

8. Following the decision 2/8 of the UNCED Preparatory Committee, the UNCED Secretary General submitted the relevant documents to the INC.

9. A number of meetings were arranged between the staff of the secretariats of the INC and of the UNCED, to ensure full coordination of the work of the secretariats. The Executive Secretary of the INC was asked to become member of UNCED's Atmosphere Working Party. Consequently, the preparation of substantive papers related to Atmosphere were considerably assisted by the Secretariat of the INC.

10. Furthermore, to ensure easy and rapid access to the information generated by the INC, starting with the 2nd session of the INC, all the information produced there has also been accessible on the APC networks, through the UNCED Global Electronic Network.

11. We expect that the period between the third and the fourth sessions of the UNCED Preparatory Committee will be particularly important in so far as INC and UNCED cooperation is concerned.

12. The next session of the INC will be held in Nairobi, on 9-20 September 1991, shortly after the completion of the third session of UNCED's Preparatory Committee. An additional session of the INC is planned for 9-20 December 1991, in Geneva, which will happen just in time to ensure that any possible decisions taken there can still be included in the official reports prepared for UNCED's fourth session, to be held in March 1992.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC)

13. The IPCC, at its fifth session, in Geneva (13-15 March 1991) adopted a workplan for 1991 and beyond. The Panel agreed to continue to concentrate its activities on tasks allotted to it by the relevant WMO Executive Council and UNEP Governing Council resolutions and decisions. At the same time, the Panel expressed its readiness to respond to the needs and requests of the INC.

14. The main elements of the workplan adopted by the IPCC include:

* Assessment of national net greenhouse gas emissions

  - Sources and sinks
  - Global Warming Potentials (GWPs)
  - Emission Scenarios

* Predictions of the regional distributions of climate change and associated impact studies, including model validation studies.

  - Update of regional climate models
  - Analysis of sensitivity to regional climate change

* Issues related to energy and industry (i.e., all end-use sectors, as well as energy production, transmission)

  - Technological assessments
  - Thematic assessments
  - Country studies

* Forestry-related Issues

  - Management practices
  - Assessment and evaluation of adaptation measures

* Vulnerability to Sea-level Rise

* Emission Scenarios

* Selected Studies of the Economic Implications of Climate Change

15. The IPCC will have two additional plenary sessions before the UNCED. The sixth session of the IPCC will be held in Geneva or in Nairobi on 29-31 October 1991, while the seventh session will be in February 1992.

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL CONGRESS

16. The 11th World Meteorological Congress (WMC) took place in Geneva, in May 1991. The WMC took a number of decisions on issues related to the INC and to the IPCC.

17. In particular, the WMC authorized the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to support the negotiating process for a framework convention on climate change, within available resources, including through the provision of staff, space in WMO's premises, and of any relevant information.

18. The WMC also approved the IPCC's plans for the future. It also approved the close cooperation of the IPCC with the Executive Secretary of the INC to ensure that the Panel could respond to requests for technical advice during the negotiating process for a framework convention.

UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL

19. The sixteenth session of UNEP's Governing Council took place in Nairobi, in May 1991. The GC also took a number of decisions relevant to intergovernmental work on climate change.

20. In particular, the GC authorized the Executive Director of UNEP to support the negotiating process for a framework convention on climate change, including through the provision of funds, staff, and of any relevant information.

COSTING EXERCISES

21. UNEP has just initiated a new project, to be implemented by the UNEP Collaborating Center on energy and the Environment at the Riso National Laboratories in Denmark, in collaboration with the Royal Institute of International Affairs (UK), and the Stockholm Environment Institute. The purpose of this project will be to initiate concrete country studies, initially four in developing and four in industrialized countries, to evaluate the costs involved in responding to climate change.

22. The Secretariat of UNCED has kept in touch with the New Delhi-based Asian Energy Institute, which is undertaking an 11-country-wide study of the costs of greenhouse gas limitation strategies. The results of the study are expected to be available before the end of 1991, and consequently will be made available for the fourth session of the UNCED Preparatory Committee.